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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [ETRD](#) [BA](#) [REGION](#) [ECTRD](#) [POL](#)  
OFFICIALS  
SUBJECT: TFLE01: DEPUTY PM PLEADS FOR U.S. TO PLAY ROLE OF  
"HONEST BROKER" IN LEBANON CRISIS

Classified By: CDA Susan L. Ziadeh for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

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Summary  
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¶1. (C) Deputy Prime Minister Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak told the Charge August 7 that the United States had to play the role of honest broker to help settle the Lebanon crisis. While recognizing that Palestinians, Lebanese and Israelis are all suffering, he complained that the U.S. was paying closer attention to Israel's concerns than those of other parties. The situation is volatile, and he feared extremism could spread as a result of the violence. In the early days of the Lebanon conflict, several Arab governments had criticized Hizballah. Because of Israel's reaction, however, the regional political atmosphere had changed, making it impossible for reasoned judgment to hold sway. The Deputy PM said Arab League ministers would support the Lebanese government's seven-point plan and offer assistance to PM Siniora at the meeting in Beirut. Shaikh Mohammed and the Charge also discussed Iran, the domestic political situation, and the U.S.-Bahrain free trade agreement. End Summary.

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"The War Should Stop Now"  
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¶2. (C) Deputy Prime Minister Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa summoned the Charge August 7 to formally deliver the Bahraini government's position on the state-of-play in the Lebanon crisis. Shaikh Mohammed told the Charge "the war should stop now." The security of all sides needs to be taken into account in developing and proposing a solution. He recognized that Palestinians, Lebanese, and Israelis were all suffering, and worried that the United States was paying closer attention to Israel's concerns than those of the other parties. "If the people do not feel that a settlement is just and fair, they will not accept it," he said.

¶3. (C) Shaikh Mohammed expressed his concern that the regional situation could get out of hand. Today the enemy is Hizballah, but extremism could flourish, adding to the challenge. "There is a fire," he said, "and we must extinguish it." Bahrain accepts a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine based upon the 1967 borders. But for almost 60 years, there has been no comprehensive agreement. Israel, he said, should help Arab countries feel secure just as the Arabs should make Israel feel secure. There needs to be new thinking in the Middle East, he stated.

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U.S. As Honest Broker

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¶4. (C) The Deputy PM said that when the Lebanon crisis erupted, several Arab governments correctly characterized Hizballah's actions as a reckless misadventure. The political atmosphere in the region changed, however, in response to the Israeli reaction. As a result, it is now impossible for reasoned judgment to hold sway.

¶5. (C) Shaikh Mohammed said that the U.S. has to play the role of an honest broker in working to settle the conflict. The United States takes into account Israel's views, the Deputy PM said, but Lebanon is not in the picture. It is not right that one side is happy but the other is not.

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UNSC Draft Resolution Biased  
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¶6. (C) The Charge responded that the United States has been in close consultation with members of the UN Security Council and the parties in the region in developing the draft UNSC resolution on Lebanon. It is a serious response to events and seeks to establish the conditions for a long-term ceasefire. It addresses issues that impact both sides. A quick ceasefire that preserves the status quo ante would result in the same cycle of violence reoccurring. The Charge urged Arab League support for the resolution. Shaikh Mohammed agreed that the resolution should deal with the long term, but said it should consider the interests of all parties. "It isn't right when the whole world wants a ceasefire but one country says, 'wait'," he complained.

¶7. (C) Shaikh Mohammed said Israel's attacks on Lebanon have been devastating, especially for civilians, who should be protected by the Geneva Convention. Prior to the crisis,

Hizballah was isolated, having the support of only Iran and Syria. Now, "everybody supports Hizballah," including Sunnis. The Charge said a solution has to include the Lebanese government extending its authority throughout the country and disarming militias. Hizballah operates independently of the Lebanese government. The GOL must be strengthened so as to ensure that no foreign forces or armed groups remain in the country. The Deputy PM replied that at the meeting in Beirut, Arab League ministers would support the Lebanese government's seven-point plan and offer to assist PM Siniora.

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Bahrain "Naked" Against Iran  
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¶8. (C) Shaikh Mohammed said that Bahrain was concerned that the conflict could expand to include Syria and Iran. The last thing the GOB wants is for Iran to be involved in any Arab country. Iran is feeling pressure from the international community and is trying to improve its relations with its neighbors. Two months ago Tehran invited King Hamad to visit Iran, but he had replied that the time is not right. Bahrain wants Iran as a good neighbor, but nothing more. A confrontation on the nuclear issue is brewing, and Bahrain knows that it could become a target in the event of hostilities. If something happens, "we will be naked, with no way to defend ourselves." He reminded the Charge that Bahrain was interested in obtaining Patriot missiles to defend itself from Iran. Shaikh Mohammed stated that the December IISS Gulf Dialogue conference, to be held in Bahrain, would be a useful forum for addressing some of these issues. He hoped the USG sends a very senior delegation.

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No Foreign Intervention in Domestic Politics  
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¶9. (C) In response to the Charge's question, the Deputy PM said that domestic political activity was increasing in the

run-up to the fall parliamentary and municipal elections. People have confidence in the parliament based upon its performance over the past four years. The Assembly passed over 100 laws and, despite fears to the contrary, the King did not veto any laws. He thought there would be an official announcement about the date of the elections about six weeks before they are held, which will most likely be in November.

¶10. (C) Shaikh Mohammed said it was important that there be no "foreign intervention" in the political process. Some oppositionists feel the United States and other governments can help them by intervening on their behalf. This would be "the worst thing," he said. Citizens should work their complaints through the system, not go to outside governments. Some critics use the language of democracy, but in reality they are not committed to freedom and democracy. He said foreign governments should be careful in dealing with these people. The Charge replied that as a matter of course, we speak to a wide spectrum of Bahrainis. In our discussions with them, we stress that the United States supports full participation in the political system and is committed to the universal principles of human rights, rule of law, a free press, and respect for all members of society, including women, youth, and minorities.

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Enhancing Commercial Relations  
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¶11. (C) Noting that the U.S.-Bahrain free trade agreement took effect on August 1, the Charge said that the United States was eager to enhance trade and investment relations with Bahrain. Shaikh Mohammed said the goal now was to bring the benefits of the FTA to Bahrain. He stated that he had just returned from Jordan, where he had participated in the formation of a joint committee to help Bahrain learn from Jordan's FTA experience. By demonstrating the benefits of the FTA, Bahrain could become an example for others in the region.

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